



October & November 2015 Newspaper

BLACK & PINK CELEBRATES TEN YEARS AT “DECADE OF BLACK & PINK” EVENT IN BOSTON!

On Friday October 16th, Black & Pink hosted a big celebration at Hibernian Hall in Boston. Formerly incarcerated Black & Pink members from around the country joined free-world Black & Pink chapter members and other free-world supporters. We wish that you were all able to be there with us, and have recommited to working toward that day! The event marked ten years of our open family working together toward collective liberation and abolition of the prison industrial complex.

We feasted on food prepared by formerly incarcerated caterers. We were entertained by our emcee, Black & Pink member Sasha Taylor from San Antonio, a vogue performance by queer youth of color, and a group sing-along to “Seasons of Love” from the musical Rent. We heard from former political prisoner Ashanti Allston who reminded us of the legacy of Kuwasi Balagoon, and a poem by Boston member Lana. CeCe McDonald electrified the crowd as she spoke about the pressing needs of trans women of color and what’s wrong with the concept of “allies”. Months ago, many of you voted on who should receive awards for their important work in support of LGBTQ prisoners; the award winners are listed on Page 12! Founder and national director Jason Lydon released “Coming Out of Concrete Closets: A Report on Black & Pink’s National LGBTQ Prisoner Survey” and rallied the crowd to fundraise thousands of dollars to support our ongoing organizing efforts. He was surprised by friends and family with a thoughtful “thank you” gift for a decade of dedicated volunteer organizing. We closed the night with a dance

party. In the December Black & Pink newspaper, the Report will be printed and we will be seeking feedback from you to incorporate into the next version!

On Saturday and Sunday, formerly incarcerated LGBTQ folks and Black & Pink chapter members came together for workshops, sharing stories, watching documentaries, and visioning. Workshops on Saturday included “HIV Criminalization”, “What is prison abolition?”, “Navigating the courts”, “Know your rights dealing with the police”, “How to do advocacy with prisoners”, and “Community organizing”. There was time to share stories, get to know each other, and space for yoga and healing arts like massage.

On Saturday evening, we heard from Ashley Diamond, recently released from a Georgia prison after a big fight over access to healthcare needs and repeated sexual assaults. We saw the videos she made of herself and her comrades inside attesting to the terrifying conditions, and Ashley joined on video chat to talk and sing with the group. Then we watched “Out In The Night”, a really remarkable film about the New Jersey 4—in short, four Black women who were targeted and imprisoned for defending themselves from a homophobic attack. They’re in the struggle and it was amazing to see three of them and the film’s director in person.

On Sunday, we gathered together at a union hall and strategized as a big group together about what’s next for Black and Pink. Transitions in leadership, expanding capacity, and sustaining the work without leaning on grant funding that tries to direct our priorities, which will always be directed by people on the inside and formerly incarcerated people. We discussed the way things get done at Black & Pink currently -- who makes what decisions and does what work, where our money is from and how it is spent, what programs are our focus.



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November 2015

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© www.calendarpedia.com 11: Veterans Day, 26: Thanksgiving Day Data provided 'as is' without warranty

December 2015

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Statement of Purpose
Black & Pink is an open family of LGBTQ prisoners and “free world” allies who support each other. Our work toward the abolition of the prison industrial complex is rooted in the experience of currently and formerly incarcerated people. We are outraged by the specific violence of the prison industrial complex against LGBTQ people, and respond through advocacy, education, direct service, and organizing.

Black & Pink is proudly a family of people of all races.

About this Newspaper
Since 2007, Black & Pink free world volunteers have pulled together a monthly newspaper primarily composed of material written by our family’s incarcerated members. In response to letters we receive, more prisoners receive the newspaper each issue!
This month, the newspaper is being sent to over: **8,600** prisoners!

Disclaimer:
Please note that the ideas and opinions expressed in the Black & Pink Newspaper are solely those of the authors and artists and do not necessarily reflect the views of Black & Pink. Black & Pink makes no representations as to the accuracy of any statements made in the Newspaper, including but not limited to legal and medical information. Authors and artists bear sole responsibility for their work. Everything published in the Newspaper is also on the internet—it can be seen by anyone with a computer. By sending a letter to “Newspaper Submissions,” you are agreeing to have your piece in the Newspaper and on the internet. For this reason, we only publish First Names and State Location to respect people’s privacy. Pieces may be edited to fit our anti-oppression values and based on our Editing Guidelines.

This month’s header is by Melanie G in TX. Thank you, Melanie!

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS TO HOT PINK!

Seeking erotic short stories, poems, AND ART by Black & Pink incarcerated and free-world family members for a new ‘zine. To be mailed, art cannot include full nudity. Please send submissions (and shout outs to the authors from the first issue mailed in January!) addressed to Black & Pink - HOT PINK. This is a voluntary project, and no money will be offered for submissions, but you might get the chance to share your spicy story with many others! The zine will be sent 1-2 times per year. To subscribe to receive a copy of HOT PINK twice a year, write to our address, Black & Pink - GENERAL.

A MESSAGE FROM JASON

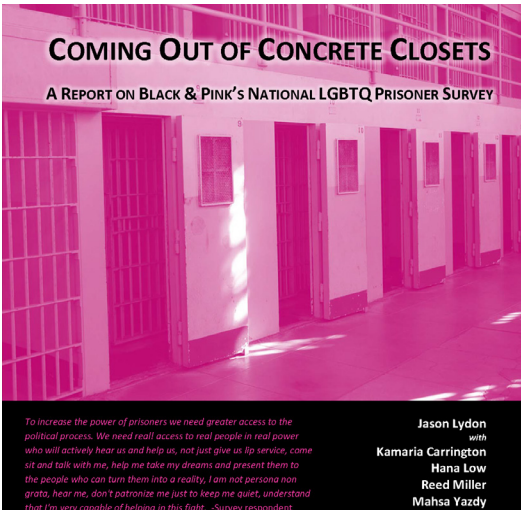
Dear friends,
I hope this note finds you doing as well as possible. I am writing this letter from our very messy national office. We are still getting everything put back together again after A Decade of Black and Pink. As you will read in other places in the newspaper, it was an INCREDIBLE event. I so very wish that all of you had been able to join us out here though please know that you were all in our hearts and minds throughout the entire weekend. The work of Black and Pink, our organizing on both sides of the prison walls, is made possible because of your wisdom, writing, and strength. Black and Pink’s power as an organization comes from the stories you all share through this newspaper and the moments of resistance you make possible.

While we will print the entire results of the survey next month, I must take a moment to celebrate the report now. Almost 15% of you all filled out the 133 question survey we printed in the newspaper last year, some of you at great risk to yourselves. Because of you we collected the largest ever amount of information about LGBTQ prisoners. A survey that Black and Pink prisoner members helped create will now be used by people all across the country. We want your stories to come out from the concrete and steel that often keeps them locked away. We want your strength to be known by everyone else. We want the injustices you experience to make others angry and then take action. The report has been covered by many, many online news sources. We will continue to use the report to expose the truth about what is going on with LGBTQ people in prison. We will also use the report to shape the work of Black and Pink as we move forward with the organization.

One of the things that I shared during our weekend celebration of Black and Pink is that I am going to transition out of leadership. I founded Black and Pink 10 years ago and it has grown into something far bigger than what I ever imagined. It has grown because we as a family are so much more than any one person. I have been working full time for Black and Pink as the National Director for about three years. Over the next year and a half (or so) we are going to be figuring out how we support a new person to take on the role of that National Director. One possibility is that we will hire someone to work alongside me for six months, or a year, and then they would take over the National Director job and we would hire another person as well. The truth is that Black and Pink has become so large of an organization that we need to have full time staff to take on all of the work we want to do. If we are going to be able to respond to your letters more quickly, if we are going to win fights against solitary confinement, if we are going to put an end to strip searches and other sexual violence we are going to need more organizing support and resources. It is also important that the founder of an organization move on to make room for new leadership. It is important that someone who was more recently incarcerated and who is more directly targeted by the prison industrial complex is at the front of the organization. Our family is strongest when those who are most affected by the violence we are working to end are the ones making the decisions.

Along with my own transition, there is an team in place to create a new leadership structure for Black and Pink as a whole. Volunteers in Boston have been making all the decisions about Black and Pink, with your feedback, for years now. It is important that our national organization has a national leadership structure. The team of folks who are working on that new structure are majority formerly incarcerated people, are all folks who attended some amount of a Decade of Black and Pink, and are all invested in the future of our family. We will be sure that our new structure is in line with our values and principles. We will be sure that those who are in leadership reflect our membership. We will be sure that the structure we create makes things easier to get done than how we work now. And most importantly we will be transparent, very clear and open, about the process. Black and Pink exists as a family for the purpose of pushing us towards a world free from prisons. We will be sure that all of our work pushes us closer towards that goal. We keep our work going knowing that once there were no prisons, that day will come again. In loving solidarity,
Jason

SURVEY REPORT COMING NEXT MONTH



BLACK AND PINK HOTLINE NUMBER!!!

After over a year of thinking about how to make this happen we are now announcing that people can call us. The phone number is **617.519.4387**. Your calls will be answered as often as possible. We are not currently able to set up accounts, so calls must be either pre-paid or collect. The hotline will be available Sundays 1-5pm (Eastern Time) for certain. You can call at other times as well and we will do our best to answer your calls.

- The purpose of the hotline is for 3 primary things:**
1. Story telling. We are trying to collect stories of incarcerated members to turn into a recording that we can play at our 10 year anniversary celebration in October. Your voices are important to us and we want to make sure they are part of this event. We want to make time to record your story if you give us permission.
 2. Supportive listening. Being in prison is lonely, as we all know. The hotline is here for supportive listening so you can just talk to someone about what is going on in your life.
 3. Organizing. If there are things going on at your prison in terms of lock downs, guard harassment, resistance, and anything else that should be shared with the public, let us know so we can spread the word.

Restrictions:
The hotline is not a number to call about getting on the pen pal list or to get the newspaper.
The hotline is not a number to call for sexual or erotic chatting.
The hotline is not a number for getting help with your current court case, we are not legal experts.

We look forward to hearing from you! This is our first attempt at this so please be patient with us as we work it all out. We will not be able to answer every call, but we will do our best.

We are sorry to share that we can only accept prepaid calls at this time. We apologize to anyone who has been trying to get through to the hotline with no success. We are still working this system out. Thank you for being understanding.

RELIGIOUS SUBMISSIONS WANTED

Black and Pink is compiling a zine about prison, faith, and sexuality.
Please submit your neatly written submission of 3 or fewer pages to:
Black and Pink - The Spirit Inside
614 Columbia Road
Dorchester MA 02125
Drawings also welcomed.

We would like your help in putting together a zine (miniature magazine) or resource guide about religion and spirituality for and by LGBTQ+ people behind bars. We’d like to request written homily, reflection, teaching, drawing, poem, or other resource for people behind bars.

With your submission about faith and prison or sexuality, please include the name of your religion/faith/spirituality (Example: Christianity, Paganism, Judaism) and your sect or denomination (Example: Baptist, none, Reform)

We welcome anything in your own words, but for space and variety, not all submissions can be accepted. By submitting, you give Black and Pink permission to publish your writing in print and on the Internet.

Hello my brothers & sisters of the LGBTQ & Black & Pink Community,
My name is Dede. I'm 21 years old & I am a beautiful black queen in a Pennsylvania prison. I'm so excited because this is my 1st letter to my family & I'm so proud & honored to be part of this family & community of the LGBTQ & Black and Pink. But anyways I want to let you all know that your letters inspire me to continue to be who I am & to be a light to other like myself.

Since getting the newspaper it has had such a tremendous impact on my life. So let me say some words of encouragement to all of you in the prison system who feel like there is no hope. I'm speaking from my own experience what I'm about to say. There is hope, there is a light at the end of the tunnel and you have a family who is willing to stand by you & back you up in anything & everything. A family who loves you. When we all stick together nothing is impossible. I'm saying there is hope because like some of you I was afraid to be myself, I let other people dictate who I was going to be. I was in the closet with my biological family and like some of you I was frustrated inside and angry at what I was allowing people to do to me & at what I was becoming. I was unhappy with myself. I was miserable. I couldn't be miserable anymore. So I wrote a letter to my mother telling her that I was gay & didn't care who knew, and that I was still the same me. So I called her a week later & I was scared I knew she got my letter so I was prepared for an argument. So I talked to her, not bringing it up cause I didn't want to start an argument. Finally towards the end of our conversation she told me she got my letter and she couldn't be more proud of me & that she still loved me no matter what. A huge weight was lifted for me and it can for you too.

Since that day my life has gotten easier and better for me. I still have challenges but I know I'm not alone. I've found love within these walls with my loving adoring hubby RARA. I've found family unity with both my LGBTQ & biological family & I've found true friends & so my family my message to you is to let go & be true to yourself. Have hope cause there is!! Just when you feel like all hope & happiness is gone and lost. That's when life surprises you the most. At the end of the day People don't define you, you do.
With much love, peace, & respect, Your Sister,
Dede, PA

Dear Black and Pink Family,

I am a gay man, and began "coming out" around June, 2010, publically, November, 2012, and officially under PREA (Prison Rape Elimination Act: Yes! I am a victim of correctional rape), April, 2014. As a man, I was unable to talk about it for over ten years, and because it is defined as a "correctional rape"; i.e., perpetrated by staff (their words, not mine); I was terrified to the point I would freak out at just the thought of taking a shower. As a consequence, I couldn't shower more than sixty times in over ten years. When it came time for strip searches, I would hyperventilate, nearly collapsing, and the guards would just laugh and ridicule me, calling me a "punk," a "pussy," and telling me, "you better grow up."

After over ten years, I just got more and more pissed, until I didn't care who I told, who knew, and didn't care about my safety anymore. Ironically, by that time, showering was ALL I could think about, yet I can still feel the "freak-out shakes" coming on when I do think about it, and I keep watching behind me for some guard sneaking up. When shower curtains appeared in Nevada facilities, it was a huge blessing for me and others like me, but also an "outing" of the secret culture of prison and psych staff's sexual abuse of prisoners. My transgender friend, Jada, asked me to write you on her behalf about an incident similar to my own, in which she was raped orally by a guard (I was gangraped anally by five guards while at county jail for denying guilt and demanding a lawyer).

Jada has been repeatedly compromised by staff due to repeated assaults, including forced oral copulation on a guard; submission to fondling of her breasts by the same guard, ridicule, and other harassment, such as inciting inmates witnessing her maltreatment to agree or approve it in some way. For example, the same guard in a separate incident bragged to another inmate while pinching one of Jada’s nipple, "I can do this, 'cause I'm a guard." She was also maliciously denied hormone replacement therapy, despite the fact that she had proved she used these hormones while free (she has since been supplied with hormones).

I listened also while Jada related an incident in which an inmate here, a member or associate of the white supremacist prison gang, "Aryan Warriors" told Jada he would've "...smashed..." her out if she had been anybody else for allegedly "snitching" on someone, a very old, well-used tactic guards deploy when they want to get someone crossed out.

At one of several protective custody yards in California where GLBTQI prisoners are housed. Jada happens to be the only MTF transgender woman at [...], which is discriminatory in and of itself. More importantly, it is evident to me this followed her from [...] to [...], where she was accused of maintaining a "cross-unit relationship" (later proved false); as an excuse to transfer her to [...], where also she was "green-lighted" by certain staff members here, because she filed grievances and a lawsuit at [...] for her maltreatment there, and then for illegal strip-searches here. She is now placed at a facility, and in the same pod as inmates who hate her for causing new policy to be implemented under PREA. I don't want Jada hurt and it's not a question of "if" it will happen but "when." Some think they can score points with the gang of their choice by "smashing out a faggot." This cannot continue. Due to certain staff members' actions, I believe Jada could be hurt badly this time as a consequence of this. I want you to publish this letter widely letting the GLBTQI world know what this Nevada facility is doing to one of our own. I don't know what else you can

do, but I do know Jada needs to be classified for LCC, not "segged" somewhere or "P.C.'D." Thank very much.

Sincerely, Anonymous, NV
Signed also, Jada

Dear Black & Pink,

Hey there, from the southern State of Georgia. This is your southern sister Tammy. I just finished the May issue of our favorite newspaper the Black & Pink and wanted to send a shout out to two girls. To Wolfgang, you can sue the State all day and night long, and it will not change the guards minds toward you; but file a lawsuit against the guards themselves and hold them responsible and accountable for what they do to you. You will earn the guards respect for they will be never be around you and they will go by the rules, girl.

Now to my other sister in Ohio pen, Michael. P.R.E.A. is supposed to be connected to those blue collect phones in many States. This State (Georgia) DOC has P.R.E.A. set up on the blue phone too, where each caller must have a name, number and a description of what happened and it must deal with a sexual assault or some type of sexual harassment. Also, not one party gets lockdown but both gets lockdown under PI and a medical exam is performed on both parties. You and the other girls should push for change in how your State DOC enforces the P.R.E.A. law within their prison system. If they copy how the State of Georgia DOC operates the P.R.E.A. hotline system, they can cut down on the bullshit that is being abusive by the inmates gangs.

Keep your heads up, my dear sisters and brothers. I had one guard slap me and I fired back at him, and now he’s swearing that I'm watching him, so he may sneak attack me in my sleep tonight, which I hope and pray will not happen. I will not let no man put their hands on me. Wish me safe nights and days, my sisters and brothers.

With warm love,
Tammy, GA

Hello, my B&P family,

I am new to this family. A friend of mine gets your newspaper and I was very astounded by how many incarcerated people there are that are being so open. It made me want to tell you a little about myself. So first off, I am a 32 year old white female doing 20 years Aggravated. I see parole in 2022. I have 3 beautiful babies. But could care less where the daddy is. I've known I was bisexual when I was 12 years old and a girl kissed me (she was 15) and showed me all about the female body. I was in a 10 year relationship with a female. We are no longer together but have remained friends. She wants to be friends with benefits, but because I love her so much I can't do that. So she's kept her distance.

Since I’ve been locked up I have fallen for 2 people. In 2012 I got in a relationship with a lesbian who was with a woman for 25 years! (I had tried to fall in love with my husband but I faked it for a 2 whole years.) She was everything I wanted in a relationship. I was skeptical at first, keeping her at arm's length, because I was scared that she'd get out and go back to her wife, which I told her I was ok with. Just please tell me from the start. We got separated Aug 2013 and I didn’t hear from her. I was devastated and heartbroken when I didn't hear from her. Finally on May 20th, 2015, I received a letter from her telling me she still loved me.

As of March 8th 2015 I decided to try again. This time I know I've found the "ONE." We've been together going on 4 months. And it's the most pure love I've ever experienced. The day I knew, I fell flat on my face in love with her, I cried. Like huge fat raindrop tears. I was scared to death to try it again. Today is June 18th 2015 and on April 25th 2015 I told her that I wanted to grow old with her. I asked her to be my wife. She had told me that she didn't want to be made into some prison wife. But told me "yes!" I'm waiting for the day I can get out and slide a REAL ring on that finger.

The guards here try to be messy and stir up drama. But we're the only couple here that DON'T fight over the drama shit. Really, we are in prison, what is there that you could possibly fight over? If we can't do it in here, how the hell can you make it out there? Because of the amount of time difference there is, I'm constantly having her reassure me that once she goes home she won't "Out of Sight, Out of Mind" me. I write her family and they know about me, but they haven't found out that we are an "US." She said if we're still together on March 8th 2016 she'll tell her parents. I'm ok with that. I'm pretty sure that I've finally found my soulmate.

Whoever said you can't find love in prison, well, they lied. Because I can tell you that, I AM IN LOVE! I hope this can inspire other inmates to know that if you stay yourself then anything can happen. Stay true to yourself even when you're fighting for your rights.

Truly yours,
Twisster, TX

I'm in Love.

Hello to my amazing family at Black & Pink.

This is my first letter to ya'll. I can't express how inspired everyone's letters of support have made me. They are actually half the reason for the story I'm fixin' to tell ya. I'll admit I am going to vent just a little. Because even though I can express how I feel to my family, they just don't understand exactly how I feel.

I'm currently confined to a very nice camp located in Southeast Ohio. Well, as nice as a camp can be. Especially compared to stories from other Fam members in the Texas & California PIC. This camp has been compared to an adult daycare center with C/O's as glorified baby-sitters. As nice as this complex is, there are always confrontation and persecution because I am an openly bisexaul man. And proud of it.

My story begins very "nice" and I use the word loosely. I moved into an honor dorm type housing unit to potentially take advantage of the compounds most prestigious program. My nice beginning was short lived once I opened up about myself and word spread to the first shift "regulars" that I was gay and wanted to participate in "their" program, things started to go downhill fast. The dirty looks were first. Then came the shake downs that looked like a tornado had blown through my area. Then the names. Gay boy, fag, queer, cock sucker, punk, etc.

All this so far didn't really bother me. It's things I've dealt with my entire adult life. At least since I was 15 and I'm now 25. No big deal. Well, they noticed this didn't phase me. So, they kicked it up a notch. Things like "Come suck my dick" and "sit and spin" (while holding up the middle finger gesture). At this point, I've started the program I moved there to complete. But there was so much being tossed at me in negative ways. I broke. I quit the program. That was the C/O's opportunity to kick me out of the dorm. And they did. So, I moved 2 housing units down, got a job at the library, things were good, well, better.

While working in the library I came across an article titled "Driven to Suicide" a story about a transgender teen from Cinn. OH who stepped in front of a semi and took her life because her parents couldn't accept that she (who was born John Alcorn) wanted to be a girl. She wrote a suicide note on her tumblr account about how her parents don't "understand" and took her to "Christian therapists who were very biased." She never got the help she needed. Her last request was to fix society, "she said the only way I will ever rest in peace, is if transgender people aren't treated the way I was."

This hit home. The same week, our PREA coordinator had meetings with all the housing units about a zero tolerance policy on harassment, whether sexual based or otherwise. Especially staff on inmate or inmate on inmate. I felt God was talking to me. Giving me a chance to stand up for all those who couldn't or wouldn't stand up for themselves.

A few weeks later I went to "Ms. Z" and asked her if what had happened to me was acceptable and what I could do about it. She said it wasn't and told me what to do. I told her my story and of my most recent account where I was picking up the library in-house drop-off where there was a complete verbal assault on me from 2 C/O's. I also told her about Leelah Alcorn and how I wanna advocate for LGBTQ's in prison. I now have her full support and the backing of the DWSS (Deputy Warden of Special Services) along with "Ms. Z." And I have since filed a report on the C/O's responsible for the harassment and also found out I'm not the first one! Hopefully this will set an example to staff that even though we're inmates we're still people with feelings and we won't stand for the ignorance and unprofessionalism of the people hired to protect and watch us. After all, prison staff are only one mistake away from being in our shoes. Right?

Thank you for listening and I look forward to the inspiration I continue to get with each and every letter, so don't think you never have anyone there. We're all here in mind, body, and soul.

God Bless,
Danny, Ohio

NEW PRISONER PUBLICATION: UNSTOPPABLE

Unstoppable is specifically by and for incarcerated folks who identify as women, gendervariant, and/or trans. This anti-authoritarian publication seeks to blend radical political analyses with personal experiences and observations. We want to elevate the voices on the inside that are often excluded from political dialogues, while also asking people on the outside to convey their social and political realities to people on the inside. Unstoppable aims to build bridges across prison walls and beyond them by facilitating dialogue and engagement between those who are incarcerated and those who are not.

Unstoppable is asking for contributions in the form of artwork, poetry, writings, social commentaries, fieldnotes from the prison yard or the streets, critical views of power structures and more. Unstoppable is particularly interested in focusing on gendered issues and systems of social control in the U.S. context, but we invite a wide array of topics. Such topics might include: organizing against police terror; personal triumphs in overcoming past or ongoing trauma; community-based responses to gendered violence and abuse; self-care in high stress environments; the consequences of deprivation in the U.S. prison system; environmental liberation; forms of resistance in women’s prisons; do-it-yourself ethics; astrology and planetary transits; et cetera!

You can write us at **unstoppable, po box 11032, pueblo, co 81001** to contribute or to get a free subscription if you are currently incarcerated! Please spread the word to folks on the inside and out; we want this distributed broadly! dearest, unstoppable

The Felonization of America,
An Essay on the Future of Corrections
by Jason B, in UT

I've lived in the midst of monsters. Prisoners. I've seen the most horrendous acts of violence imaginable, things I've never thought a human being capable of doing. I've also witnessed shining examples of what makes humanity a truly glorious thing. I have seen why people say that the prison has a revolving door. I have seen in my life men and women addicted to drugs, alcohol, food, anything that they thought would fill that unfillable void within. It is the abyss, to me, that Nietzsche spoke of, an abyssal part of me that I glimpse every time I gaze in the mirror. Most people I have met in prison, from the hardest faces, to the most mild mannered of people, have all had one thing in common. Addiction. They share similarly in their suffering without knowing it, from the seemingly hopeless sex addict to the junkie, we are all addicts in different ways of self medicating ourselves with our chosen vices into our own private oblivion.

You don't need me to quote from studies or statistical figures for me to show you that the absolute number one cause of incarceration in America is addiction. The felonization of America is growing at an exponentially absurd rate with registries being created for offenders, and not just sex offenders either. "The sex offender registry is something that might have been conceived with the purest of intentions, but is something that is now rapidly becoming a tool of darkness. This glorified mark list, or hit list, if you will, is just as accessible by the average housewife as it is by someone with malevolent desires. Do we really need to create more victims?" (Jason B, Black and Pink Magazine, March, 2015). Registries and warehousing nonviolent offenders is not the way to fight recidivism. You don't have to be a scientist to see that this is heading to critical mass. We need reform and we need it now.

Warehousing people for the almighty dollar needs to be abolished. As soon as someone is incarcerated that person needs to go into programming if they so desire the chance. Even if they don't want it, it should be at least offered shortly after incarceration. There needs to be an abolishment of the public aspect if searchable felon registries. Registries create secondary victims of families of the offender and of course make the offender themselves available to any sort of hate crimes. Sex offenders are singled out in most states, an offender demographic that has a 1.8 percent recidivism rate in the state of California, according to a report released in 2013 by the California Department of Corrections. Do you think that the registry itself aided in the low rate of recidivism?

I personally don't think so. I know from experience. I am a sex offender. Personally, I think it is the therapy and how sex offenders are treated in prison. Those are what I think makes the rates that low in most states. I don't think it is the sheer amount of time we do. The therapy works, if you choose to let it. The registry seems to offer little to the equation. According to Prison Legal News (April, 2012, p.30, Oct. 2008, p.32), some states are making registries for murderers and various drug crimes. This is not going in the right direction. It is already enormously difficult for offenders to find employment and housing. The registries impose blanket restrictions on the civil rights of an entire class of citizens. Even though we are people that have made poor choices, we are still people. We are still citizens, and we have rights too.

Fighting crime by having a registry and handing out felonies like candy will only dig the hole deeper. We, as Americans, supposedly a compassionate and understanding people, need to give those felons that choose to rehabilitate themselves, the chances to be employable, and live happy lives without having to constantly look over their shoulder for fear of a bullet or a beating. If you think I could be exaggerating, just search the phrase, "Registry hate crimes" on the Internet. There needs to be a massive corrections reform. There also needs to be an influx of educational and vocational opportunity available to all inmates and those on parole.

It's a supremely difficult thing to admit what you have done, what you were, and change. Most prisoners only face it if they know there is no other way out. No way to beat the system. Yet, you don't believe. You don't believe in the system because the system doesn't believe in you, and that you can change. "Corrections" exists to anticipate, no expect, your return. For me, someone who had been a felon since age 18 in 1998 (burglary 3rd degree, which was to steal a camera to support my drug habit) and then another felony case in 2001 for stealing again to support my habit, and then an actual possession drug charge years later in 2008 , and then finally a sex charge in 2011 for having consensual illicit conversation with a girl 2 months shy of 18, I was offered no quarter in sentencing. I'd failed on probation numerous times and this was the last straw. However, I had never undergone any type of therapy. It was never offered to me during my incarcerations in jail, and then when released I would do amazing on probation until I began to use again. Indeed, I was high 24 hours a day when I chose to commit the sex crime. I think that if I was offered rehab during one of my previous incarcerations that I may not be in prison right now. However, I made the choice that placed me here.

Upon incarceration, and being sentenced to prison, I was looking forward to the chance to finally confront my addiction problems, my addiction to drugs, my addiction to pornography, and my addiction to anything that would allow me to self-medicate my problems away. However, in Utah, I found that you must wait until after your initial board of pardons appearance to even be placed on the SOTP (Sex Offender Treatment Program) waiting list. I also painfully discovered that sex offenders must wait an initial 18 months before their first board appearance, period. When I went the hearing went well. I really want to change my behaviors and thinking errors. *Continued on Page 5...*

Continued from Page 4... I found that I was to have another rehearing in 5 years, I was informed that I would be pulled sometime before the next hearing to enter into therapy. All I could do was stand and take it like a man while every part of me wanted to collapse. I went back to my white bricked cell and stared out my tiny window, and ultimately chose to go on with my life. Warehoused.

People should not have to wait years to get into therapy. It should be something offered from the get go to everyone. It should also be an active part of incarceration. Therapy, and learning about your cycles of behavior, be it addictive or violent, and learning about your risk factors and about what perceived needs you were trying to meet when you chose to offend, is something that every inmate should be able to do after incarceration. Couple that with an injection of vocational rehab and education, and you will have the start of something good! Give inmates grants to be able to get degrees, instead of offering certificates not worth the paper they're printed on.

Upon release I will have to register on the sex offender registry for ten years. As a felon it is already difficult to find housing and employment, but as a sex offender it will be more so. People could judge or even hate me without know me. It's something I expect. I probably won't be able to be around small children or even go to the park or shopping by myself since the person I chose to victimize was under the age of 18. However, I made the choice to offend. I must live with those decisions. I am doing 6 years or more for those choices. People in the building I live in, a therapy building, often ask me how I feel about doing as much time, or more, than someone that chose to deviantly sexual assault someone, when I had never even met the person I chose to victimize. I smile and tell them I don't mind. I really don't/ Having the opportunity to change my thinking and behaviors and ultimately become a better man is the most important thing in the world to me now. I do not want to be defined by the poor choices I made, only by how I overcame them. I am living these years like most won't so I can spend the rest of my life living like they can't.

I am so very weary of hiding and pretending, weary of searching for something I can never find. Tired of the emptiness. I didn't think that anyone cared for the longest time. I'd sit in my cell, especially after my wife left me, and contemplate ways to end my life. I even tried... My life only began to get better when I started considering confronting my problems. I chose to live. I recognized that I didn't intend to die just yet. The foundations of my concept of the world had begun to change. An offender can change. Anyone can choose to. The scars on my soul had been ripped open to expose new wounds. Eventually those wounds healed for the better, and the man that penned this essay is a better man. I wish our government would reform the entire corrections system and help those, like me, who choose to live life righteously instead of in the dark.

MILITARY HAIRCUTS: MY FIRST POST ABOUT WHAT IT’S LIKE TO LIVE, AND GROW AS A HUMAN BEING: TRANSITIONING IN A MILITARY PRISON.

The last few weeks have been particularly challenging for me. For the first time in years, I felt like giving up... then, I found my “second wind” to be human.

I wasn’t sure I was ever going to write this article. Recently, on the evening of September 18, I finally decided that maybe I should quit, to give up on everything and everyone: my family, my friends, my supporters, my court-martial appeal, and my other legal battles—even my articles for the Guardian and my Medium debut. Basically, I nearly surrendered.



These are the latest photographs of me—from February 2015—the week I began HRT.

You see, that evening I found out that the military was going to force me to keep my hair cut very short, to the “male” hair standard.

I didn’t take the news well. I felt sick. I felt sad. I felt gross—like Frankenstein’s monster wandering around the countryside avoiding angry mobs with torches and pitch forks.

I wanted to run away. I wanted to close the door to my cell, turn out the lights, and shun the world outside. I did exactly that. And then I cried, and cried, sniffled a little bit, and then cried some more. This went on until around midnight.

I wanted to cry myself to sleep on the concrete floor, but a guard came by twice and started asking me if I was okay. “Yes, I’m fine,” I said. I was not okay, though. It wasn’t his fault; he was just a young guy, maybe 20 years old, I thought to myself.

Then I started to think really dark thoughts. You know, “emo”-goth stuff, like “black isn’t dark enough of a color for me.”

After five years—and more—of fighting for survival, I had to fight even more. I was out of energy.

I called Chase Strangio, my ACLU lawyer, and I cried. As my legal counsel, he represents me in this lawsuit to challenge the hair policy that makes and treats me like a monster or a problem. But I just wanted love and support, and someone to cry to when I was feeling alone. He did such a wonderful job just listening to me.

After feeling devastated, humiliated, hurt, and rejected—and after wanting to give up on the world—I found my “second wind” of sorts.

I can make it just a little longer. I just hope it’s not too much longer. I hope to use this platform as a place to document my experience and share my story and, maybe even begin a conversation. Going through such a seismic, existential shift in my life—transitioning in a military prison —presents real, meaningful, and daily challenges. I want to hear your thoughts and questions so we can continue to have a dialogue. I also look forward to reading the stories you are brave enough to share with the world so we can understand each other and define ourselves on our own terms.

-Chelsea Manning

Source: <https://medium.com/@xychelsea>

CECE MCDONALD REFLECTS ON LIFE AND ACTIVISM SINCE HER RELEASE FROM PRISON

By JamesMichael Nichols, Huffington Post, October 3, 2015

In a time when conversations surrounding transgender identity are taking shape at a continually increasing rate in mainstream culture, the images and stories of trans people being broadcast to the public oftentimes don’t reflect the nuances of the vast spectrum of trans experiences. In an effort to challenge and combat this, HuffPost Gay Voices is bringing together significant and historic trans and gender non-conforming figures to share their stories and discuss the ongoing struggle to achieve liberation for all marginalized people.

CeCe McDonald is a name that continually resonates in the hearts and minds of the queer community, and CeCe herself is an individual whose name holds an immense amount weight in conversations surrounding the incarceration of trans women of color and the prison industrial complex.

McDonald was sentenced in May 2012 to spend 41 months in a men's prison facility, despite identifying as female, for the death of Dean Schmitz in June 2011. McDonald was walking past a local bar on the night of Schmitz's death when she became the recipient of racist, transphobic and violent language that evolved into an altercation with Schmitz and other bar patrons. After the group hurled a glass at McDonald's face, she attempted to defended herself with a pair of scissors, resulting in Schmitz's death.

Amidst large-scale outcry and support from the queer community, she was released in January 2014 after serving 19 months of her sentence. She now opens up to The Huffington Post about her life since leaving prison, her thoughts about Caitlyn Jenner and her growth as both an activist and a trans woman of color.

The Huffington Post: How has your life changed both as an activist and as a black trans woman in America since your release from prison?

CeCe McDonald: Well, as an activist I have come to know a lot of people who are just as motivated and inspired to do activist work, especially around liberation for black trans women. But I’ve also come to a point where I have been calling out people on their falsehood and saying that they’re about that life when they’re really not. I’ve been really diligent about making sure people are adamant about the work that they do and who they do it for. And to not co-opt movements – you know, using certain movements for their own personal agenda or gain.

But as an activist I have grown a lot. I have come to know and understand and learn about different cultures – to respect them. As a black person I do sometimes find myself in my own bigotry, so I’m just learning to decolonize my mind around a lot of shit that I’ve been taught for so long. It’s a process and luckily I have a very supportive, loving community and colleagues that work with me, help me with certain things and let me know. They motivate me more in the work that I do. As an activist I feel like we tend to box ourselves and fight for things that affect us directly, and with intersections of oppression I have learned that I’m connected to every fucked up thing that happens in the world regardless of if I want to see it that way or not.

Right now I’m really focused on the Black Trans Lives Matter movement here in Minneapolis with other trans, queer and gender-nonconforming people of color on doing some more physical action work and just bringing a different forefront to Minnesota in general.

The Huffington Post: Caitlyn Jenner has completely changed the landscape when it comes to the way mainstream cultures conceptualizes transgender identity. Do you think there are productive things that could come from her form of visibility or do you think that she’s merely another conservative Republican trying to co-opt a movement for her own use?

I feel like me and Caitlyn Jenner only have one thing in common and that is being trans. I’m a black trans woman, she’s a white trans woman. She comes from a background of class and privilege, I don’t. She has money, I don’t.

I feel like society’s idea of “what trans women are” have loosely been based on Caitlyn Jenner coming out, so we fail to realize that this is a person that is definitely a conservative Republican... *Continued on Page 6*

Continued from Page 5... and goes against all the things that we’re fighting for on a daily basis... conservative Republican politics are against women, are against trans women, are against the LGBTQIA community, are against impoverished communities. She seems to have this idea that if “they” can do it, we all can do it -- and that’s just not the rhetoric that I feel our community needs to be internalizing. It’s actually laced with so much misogyny and transmisogyny anti-woman politics flowing around. We have trans women who don’t have the ability to transition the way that they want to because of funds and accessibility, having to deal with dysphoria on a day to day basis, and then we have this one trans woman in the media who somehow garnered more attention than Laverne Cox or Janet Mock or Carmen Carrera or any trans woman of color .

I’m not saying that she turned trans [to get attention] or anything like that but she’s definitely using our movement to push her own agenda and that’s very frustrating. Just take a look at the trans women and trans women of color who are working so hard to beat these stigmas, stereotypes and ideologies -- so all I can say is I support her as a trans woman but that’s as far as it goes.



The Huffington Post: Let’s talk a bit about issues like prison reform and the incarceration of trans women. How do we get people in America to care about these issues and actually seem them as worthy of their time and resources to invest in them?

That’s a good question. We are given this false idea that prisons are safe or prisons protect you or prisons reform the people within them -- we have come to see that’s not the case. People come out of prison sometimes worse than when they went in. Prisons not only affect the inmates but they affect the people that work there. We see that prisons take up resources, they take up space and we need to get people to understand that as long as people are using prisons for their own agendas and fear mongering tactics and having people believe that prisons are safe, then that’s what we’re doing to believe. But we need to decolonize our minds around prisons and what prison reform is. We don’t need any more prisons -- we need those funds and resources that are put into prisons to be put into our communities, like our schools, our hospitals, our mental health facilities, fair housing and housing programs, employment agencies, places that will actually help people not turn to certain things that will tend to criminalize them and either have them incarcerated or dead.

The Huffington Post: What’s the best way for people that don’t identify as trans or gender-nonconforming to be allies to trans people, and black trans women specifically, and all of the issues that you’ve been talking about?

That’s an extensive list [laughs]. I feel like one of the ways that people can advocate for trans women in an everyday way is calling out bigotry, sexism, misogyny, transmisogyny, transphobia and homophobia when you see it... You have to think about how much of yourself that you’re putting out there in relation to you being an advocate for a trans woman. And that goes further than saying “I’m an advocate for a trans person,” you actually have to put in some work. Call out bullshit when it needs to be called out and call it in when it needs to be called in... Also, just supporting trans women on a day to day basis, whether supporting funding for them or helping them register for school or letting trans women know that you are there for them. You know, being an advocate for trans women isn’t just speaking up for trans women, it’s actively being there for trans women. Be able to share your space, do not co-copt our movements or our lives, don’t just tokenize us, don’t use our stories and our images for your own agenda or your own gain and make sure that if you are requesting something from a trans woman that you can pay her. People don’t understand that transitioning, especially medically, is really hard and a lot of trans women don’t have the funds or the resources to do those things. Just think about how we are uplifting and supporting and appreciating trans women – not just tolerating us but actually appreciating us and our stories and our struggles and our transcestors struggles.

What do you want your legacy to be?

I just want people to know that I strive so hard to be an outstanding advocate, not just for my own personal movements but for movements across the globe. I just want people to know that regardless of how I comes across, it’s about me calling things out when they need to be called out and I don’t have an issue with that. I’m tired of feeling like I, or any trans woman of color, feel like they have to walk around on eggshells or be coy and pretend that everything is

ok when that’s not the case. And that’s the legacy that I want people to know – that I fought tooth and nail for trans women. That I fought so hard for trans liberation and the liberation of people of color and the ending of conservative politics so that we can try to live and be liberated like we really want to.

Somebody said to me last night that “the work isn’t done until it’s done.” A lot of people just gave up after gay marriage and so many things that they fought for that trans women were a part of, and once they had their victory trans women didn’t seem to matter anymore. And so I’m just saying that I’m not going to continue to support movements that are not supporting trans women because people are, again, co-opting our movement, tokenizing our movements, fantasizing and glamorizing our movements, white-washing our movements, gay-washing our movements and we, as trans women and trans women of color, need to take back out legacies. We need to take back our right to be who we are and not have people taking away our struggles and our transcestors struggles. My legacy is all of our legacies. And it started with Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera and Miss Major and the Stonewall Riots and the cafeteria riots. and those movements gave me the ability to even have



this interview right now. Trans people have existed for centuries and we thrive and we will never be extinct. And as long as the human race exists there will always be trans people, there will always be queer people, there will always be gender-nonconforming people and we’re not going anywhere. I want that reality to live on through the lives of generations that come after us. We have to keep fighting -- because the work isn’t done until it’s done.

“Free CeCe,” a documentary about the life and incarceration of CeCe McDonald co-produced by Laverne Cox, is currently in post-production and slated for an expected release date of April 2016.

THE WORLD'S FIRST PRISONER WORKER CO-OP

by Ajowa Nzinga Ifateyo, Grassroots Economic Organizing, geo.coop



Roberto Rodriguez Rosario and Lymarie Nieves Plaza answer questions at ECWD 2015.

At the age of 19, Roberto Luis Rodriguez Rosario was serving a 125-year prison sentence in Puerto Rico. The experience was devastating.

After about 15 years, Rodriguez and several fellow inmates used that experience to organize something liberating for themselves and others, something that could potentially and significantly change the way prisoners are incarcerated around the world. Rodriguez helped organize the world’s first worker cooperative composed solely of prisoners in Puerto Rico - Cooperativa de Servicios ARIGOS.

Now 39, Rodriguez is spreading the word about how cooperatives can rehabilitate prisoners and give them hope.

“The cooperative model can be used to create spectacular change,” Rodriguez told Eastern Conference for Workplace Democracy (ECWD) conference participants in Worcester, MA on July 13 in a workshop that he led entitled Cooperative Ownership and the Prison Industrial Complex: A Case Study from Puerto Rico. “Co-op theory is magical.”

Joining him in the ECWD presentation was cooperative educator Lymarie Nieves Plaza, Director of Marketing at the Cooperativa de Ahorro y Credito, Candel Coop in Manati, P.R., who, while a member of another co-op, helped organize the prison cooperative from the outside. [...]

Other countries have developed “social cooperatives” which have both prisoners and outsiders as members, to help deal with social issues, but Cooperativa ARIGOS was the first made up entirely of prisoners. Prisoner cooperatives and social cooperatives that provide services to prisoners or ex-prisoners currently exist in *Continued on Page 7...*

Continued from Page 6...South America, Italy, Canada, Ethiopia, and other parts of Europe, but none of them are composed of all prisoners and run by prisoners. “It’s important to be clear,” Nieves said after the workshop. “Cooperatives exist in the world with inmates, but Puerto Rico was the first to have a cooperative completely working with full inmate members leading everything [as members and on the board].”

Through Cooperativa de Servicios ARIGOS, organized in 2003, inmates at 945 Guayama Penitentiary, P.R., make crafts to earn money. Interestingly though, the project started out as therapy. Other prisoners, like Rodriguez, had trouble dealing with anger and hopelessness. [...]

In prison, he was kept in his cell 22 hours a day, with only two hours for a shower and exercise. “It’s a wonder I didn’t go crazy,” he said. He managed to complete high school two years later, and in 1998 he started an inmates’ college program where he was able to complete a year and a half of the requirements for a bachelor’s degree.

Rodriguez became spokesman for the inmate population on the Island, and in 2003 the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation of Puerto Rico recognized him for his leadership working for the rights of inmates.

The co-op had already started in 1993, two years before Rodriguez’s arrival in the prison. The co-op began with an idea for a mental health program in which inmates started creating art and craft pieces for therapy. Three prisoners -- Hector Quinones, Efrain Ortiz and Santos Villaran -- initially started the co-op.

“We wanted to create things with our hands to keep our minds together,” Rodriguez told the ECWD workshop. “When they discovered talents they didn’t know they had...When they saw the things they could create with their own hands, it transformed them.”

The prisoners started out creating gifts for their families. “They were amazingly beautiful pieces,” Rodriguez said. Then they wanted to sell them. In their search for business options, the prisoners asked that Liga De Cooperativa y Fomento Cooperativo (cooperative league) for information on how a co-op works. When the inmates heard the presentation, they fell in love with cooperatives because it allowed them to work together and help more inmates. The prisoners requested education to learn more.

When the prisoners chose the co-op model to work with, they ran into an obstacle: Puerto Rican law did not allow prisoners to be a part of cooperatives. In 2003, the General Law of Puerto Rico Cooperatives Societies (formerly Law #50 of August 4, 1994) was amended (as Law 239) to allow inclusion of cooperatives from the Puerto Rican Penal System.

Through working with the art, a more important change took place -- the inmates changed themselves through constructive and satisfying work. “We started to change the way we saw the world,” Rodriguez said. “It ended up transforming our lives practically without us noticing... It was important for us because it allowed us to be in contact with our community. This became part of our rehabilitation process.”

After the organization was incorporated, the government invited the co-op to show the evolution of the model. Rodriguez was secretary of the ARIGOS Co-op Board and wrote letters to the governor of Puerto Rico, Sila Maria Carderon, letting her know what the intentions of the cooperative were. He was allowed to go to the Senate, too. Rodriguez, other members of the board, Nieves and other co-op representatives spoke before the Puerto Rican Senate to lobby for change.

“They gave us the opportunity, and the law was amended,” Rodriguez said through a translator. “We wrote in a small corner in the history of cooperatives that we are the first co-op in prison.”

Nieves, who had first made contact with the cooperative because her co-op wanted to write an article on the prisoner co-op and to buy crafts from them, began to volunteer with them in 2008 teaching them cooperative philosophy, principles, history, law and governance.

Rodriguez said that he transcribed the seven cooperative principles and adapted them to prison culture. **In particular, before they could organize the co-op, they had to educate their members about the bad treatment of gay prisoners. “We had to see people as individuals regardless of sexuality and religion,” he said. “We created new nouns to see everybody as our equal. We started to change the way we saw the world before we were able to function as a co-op.”**

The entire Puerto Rican cooperative movement supported them, even holding an exhibition for the prisoners. Through the co-ops the prisoners exhibit their work at co-op events, and sell their wares. The board and cooperative members attend cooperative events with two guards. Nieves lobbied the correctional system to gain respect for the co-op and allow them to work by themselves. She helped to educate the co-op members inside the prison, organized government meetings so that the members could present their projects, served as the group’s spokesperson in the co-op movement, and helped with marketing and seeking support from other cooperatives.

[...] Rodriguez earned his complete freedom on August 16, 2014. In just 11 months he was traveling the U.S. mainland, spreading the co-op gospel at co-op conferences.

Puerto Rican law currently prevents ex-prisoners from socializing, Rodriguez said, and he and Nieves are now working on trying to change laws so that people who are released from prisons can be in a co-op together. He wants to make the model one that benefits prisoners all over.

“We have a rehabilitation model that is amazingly effective,” he said. “We have to expand this in institutions all over the country and the world. It is going to benefit segments of the population who can’t get a job.”

The success of ARIGOS Cooperative has led to four prisoner cooperatives in Puerto Rico. Nieves also helped to form new co-ops in jails, following the rules and the model that ARIGOS already worked on. She worked on legislation for a women’s co-op, Tainas Co-op in Vega Alta, P.R. Nieves is also working with another cooperative, Vencedores Co-op, to get them ready for incorporation. Then there is the Zarzal Co-op, in eastern Puerto Rico, and a co-op organized to offer renewable energy is in the start-up phase. The average age of the prisoners is 33 years and they have a 7-9th grade education.

According to information the Puerto Rico Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation provided to Nieves-Plaza, approximately 12,400 people are in prisons in Puerto Rico, 400 of whom are women; and 425 young adults. The prison population is expected to grow to 16,000 in 2016. The island’s population is 3.7 million. It costs \$40,000 to \$43,000 to keep a person in prison the first year. After that it costs \$20,000 yearly, Nieves said. The prison system’s recidivism rate is 53% annually, she added.

Nieves also spoke about her work working first at the men’s prison and then later with women.

When Nieves saw the treatment of women and their conditions, it devastated her and almost made her give up the work. “When I entered the women’s prison for the first time, I couldn’t stop crying,” she said. “I didn’t want to go back. I didn’t have the strength.”

Then there was pressure from those who attacked her for working with people who others felt did not deserve their help. But the need of the women was so great, especially in regards to their children, that it moved her to rise above her own pain at seeing others in such pain. She learned to challenge the system and to educate people. Now she says she has named her work “transformational cooperativism.” [...]

Rodriguez is also working to develop the first ex-prisoner cooperative on the island to help with transition and with finding work.

“I hope to do it to the last day of my life,” he said. “It gave me hope in living. It gave us this unbelievable satisfaction with our lives.”

The Puerto Rican prisoner model, if adopted on the mainland, could lead to overhauling the U.S. prison system, making it truly rehabilitative and leading it to be less of a tax burden and to allow prisoners to contribute more to society by helping to provide them with income and a new sense of their possibilities.* [...]

Imagine what a difference would be made if incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people could get work and transform their lives, particularly in communities of color devastated by disproportionate numbers of their members being locked away in institutions with few or no programs to re-educate and otherwise train prisoners to be productive members of their communities.

Nieves-Plaza, who is better at speaking and writing English, can be reached at lymariemp2@gmail.com; Rodriguez can be contacted at corazonlibre2011@gmail.com.



Co-op prisoner art: “El Quijote” sporting the cooperative colors

SEVEN COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES

VOLUNTARY
OPEN
MEMBERSHIP

DEMOCRATIC
MEMBER CONTROL

COOPERATION
AMONG COOPERATIVES

AUTONOMY & INDEPENDENCE

MEMBER
ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

CONCERN
FOR THE
COMMUNITY

EDUCATION
TRAINING AND INFORMATION

*B&P editor’s note: The prison system will never be “truly rehabilitative”, and not everyone locked up needs to “rehabilitated”. We need to abolish the prison industrial complex and live in a liberated society together.

Worker cooperatives can be part of a new economy, and we hope you are inspired by the vision of prisoner cooperatives!

STRUGGLING FOR RIGHTS

REMEMBERING TWO-SPIRITS THIS THANKSGIVING

Rev. Irene Monroe, Nov. 23 2011, shewired.com

Every year I submit this piece for Thanksgiving because it captures, in my humble opinion, the best way I can express my outrage of the genocide of Native Americans that is summarily glossed over with a national celebration and an annual holiday of its occupiers.

As I prepare for the Thanksgiving holiday, I am reminded of the autumnal harvest time’s spiritual significance. As a time of connectedness, I pause to acknowledge what I have to be thankful for. But I also reflect on the holiday as a time of remembrance - historical and familial.

Historically, I am reminded that for many Native Americans, Thanksgiving is not a cause of celebration, but rather a National Day of Mourning, remembering the real significance of the first Thanksgiving in 1621 as a symbol of persecution and genocide of Native Americans and the long history of bloodshed with European settlers.

I am also reminded of my Two-Spirit Native American brothers and sisters who struggle with their families and tribes not approving of their sexual identities and gender expressions as many of us do with our families and faith communities.

“Yes, there’s internalized homophobia in every gay community, but as Native Americans we are taught not to like ourselves because we’re not white. In our communities, people don’t like us because we’re gay,” Gabriel Duncan, member of Bay Area American Indian Two Spirits (BAAITS), told the Pacific News Service.

And consequently, many Two-Spirit Native Americans leave their reservations and isolated communities hoping to connect with the larger LGBTQ community in urban cites. However, due to racism and cultural insensitivity, many Two-Spirits feel less understood and more isolated than they did back home.

But homophobia is not indigenous to Native American culture. Rather, it is one of the many devastating effects of colonization and Christian missionaries that today Two-Spirits may be respected within one tribe yet ostracized in another.

“Homophobia was taught to us as a component of Western education and religion,” Navajo anthropologist Wesley Thomas has written. “We were presented with an entirely new set of taboos, which did not correspond to our own models and which focused on sexual behavior rather than the intricate roles Two-Spirit people played. As a result of this misrepresentation, our nations no longer accepted us as they once had.”

Traditionally, Two-Spirits symbolized Native Americans’ acceptance and celebration of diverse gender expressions and sexual identities. They were revered as inherently sacred because they possessed and manifested both feminine and masculine spiritual qualities that were believed to bestow upon them a “universal knowledge” and special spiritual connectedness with the “Great Spirit.” Although the term was coined in the early 1990s, historically Two-Spirits depicted transgender Native Americans. Today, the term has come to also include lesbian, gay, bisexual, and intersex Native Americans.

The Pilgrims, who sought refuge here in America from religious persecution in their homeland, were right in their dogged pursuit of religious liberty. But their actual practice of religious liberty came at the expense of the civil and sexual rights of Native Americans

And the Pilgrims’ animus toward homosexuals not only impacted Native American culture, but it also shaped Puritan law and theology.

Here in the New England states, the anti-sodomy rhetoric had punitive if not deadly consequences for a newly developing and sparsely populated area. The Massachusetts Bay Code of 1641 called for the death of not only heretics, witches and murderers, but also “sodomites,” stating that death would come swiftly to any “man lying with a man as with a woman.” And the renowned Puritan pastor and Harvard tutor, the Rev. Samuel Danforth in his 1674 “fire and brimstone” sermon preached to his congregation that the death sentence for sodomites had to be imposed because it was a biblical mandate.

Because the Pilgrims’ fervor for religious liberty was devoid of an ethic of accountability, their actions did not set up the conditions requisite for moral liability and legal justice. Instead, the actions of the Pilgrims brought about the genocide of a people, a historical amnesia of the event, and an annual national celebration of Thanksgiving for their arrival.

In 1990, President George H.W. Bush ironically -- if not ignorantly -- designated November as “National American Indian Heritage Month” to celebrate the history, art, and traditions of Native American people.

As we get into the holiday spirit, let us remember the whole story of the arrival of the Pilgrims and other European settlers to the New World.

On a trip home to New York City in May 2004, I went to the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture to view the UNESCO Slave Route Project, “Lest We Forget: the Triumph Over Slavery,” that marks the United Nations General Assembly’s resolution proclaiming 2004 “The International Year to Commemorate the Struggle Against Slavery and Its Abolition.”

In highlighting that African Americans should not be shamed by slavery, but instead defiantly proud of our memory of it, I read the opening billboard to the exhibit that stated, “By institutionalizing memory, resisting the onset of oblivion, recalling the memory of tragedy that for long years remained hidden or unrecognized and by assigning it its proper place in the human conscience, we respond to our duty to remember.”

It is in the spirit of our connected struggles against discrimination that we can all stand on a solid rock that rests on a multicultural foundation for a

true and honest Thanksgiving.

And in so doing, it helps us to remember, respect, mourn and give thanks to the struggles not only our LGBTQ foremothers and forefathers endured, but also the ongoing struggle our Native American Two-Spirit brothers and sisters face everyday--and particularly on Thanksgiving Day.

NATIVE AMERICANS TALK GENDER IDENTITY AT A ‘TWO-SPIRIT’ POWWOW

Adapted from story by Jorge Rivas, fusion.net, February 9, 2015

Spirit Wildcat, Fort Hall, Idaho, member of the Shoshone-Bannock tribe “I came here to represent the Montana two-spirit society as one of the first royalties that they’ve had,” said Wildcat



Ruth Villasenor, Bay Area, CA, a founders of the two-spirit powwow.

“The term two-spirit is a modern term so when people hear that term they automatically assume it’s male and female, which is how many people define it, but to me it’s more of a historical reminder that before colonization all of our tribes had multiple genders. There were terms for various genders in all of our nations and we were known by the roles we played in our communities, not our genders.”



Today
By Kenisha H., LA

Today is the day that I encourage someone
Today is the day that I help someone in need
Today I stand tall, or today I will fall
Today I live with power, or my day will be sour
Today the world is filled with so much hate,
But we use today to challenge that hate
Whatever your today is, use it for the here and now
So we can use today to pave the way.

Stop Running
By Kenisha H., LA

Why do you hide sister?
You are strong and beautiful.
Why do you run sister?
Are you scared of what others think?
Stop running sister.
Embrace the beauty that is you.
Embrace the power that you carry.
Embrace the new person that is you.
Start accepting you.
Stop Running!!!



Pain & Sorrow
By Stephen C., ID

The pain & sorrow you feel
You must keep spinning that wheel
Don't close your & pull away
In time, Heaven will brighten your days
With whatever transpires
Remember to keep burning that fire
From the bottom of your heart, always show love
Cause it comes from B&P name of
So dry your tears
Cause you have nothing to fear
We will always have each others' backs
It doesn't matter what anyone else lacks

The pain & sorrow you feel
You must keep spinning that wheel
Always remember to stay strong
Even when your life goes wrong
B&P is here to understand
And every LGBTQ will lend a hand
Dig deep down inside your soul
And keep tryin to achieve your goals

The pain & sorrow you feel
You must keep spinning that wheel
We may not see another ones face
But this life we all will embrace
We will stand proud & fight by each others side
Cause every LGBTQ has nothing to hide
Don't let any pain bring you down
No matter what, smile & never show a frown
It doesn't matter what we've done
Every LGBTQ will soak up the sun
B&P will always be around
Even when an LGBTQ is on the ground

The pain & sorrow you feel
You must keep spinning that wheel
You will always be able to feel the pain
You will want to cry even after it rains
Every LGBTQ's will never be far apart
Our pride will always be in our hearts
The LGBTQ family is all we have got
And we thank Black & Pink a lot
Remember to always stay on your feet
And there will be more members that you will meet
So remember to look up at the sky
And let the pain & sorrow pass you by

LGBTQ: WE ALWAYS WILL STAND

BLACK & PINK INCARCERATED FAMILY FEEDBACK! MAIL TO: Black & Pink - FEEDBACK

-----rip slip here-----
Black and Pink currently has a set up for “free world” chapters that are involved in the ongoing work of Black and Pink. In order to start a chapter there has to be at least 4 individuals involved in the work of the chapter and everyone has to agree with Black and Pink’s statement of purpose and analysis. There have been a few attempts to start Black and Pink chapters inside of prison. There have been attempts to do so with permission from administrators and other times without it.

How do you think we can create chapters of Black and Pink inside prisons? _____

What support would a prison chapter of Black and Pink need from “free world” people? What challenges might be faced? _____

What might the goals of a prison chapter be? _____

Do you feel like you might be ready to start a chapter of Black and Pink? _____

If yes, who are the other people who would be part of the chapter? _____

THE SENATE’S BIPARTISAN CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM BILL ONLY TACKLES HALF THE PROBLEM

By Mychal Denzel Smith, thenation.com, October 14, 2015

Determination to “do something” about the issue of mass incarceration has, at last, moved from the academic and activist worlds into the halls of Congress: At the beginning of October, a bipartisan coalition of Senators, including Chuck Grassley, Dick Durbin, Cory Booker, John Cornyn, and Tim Scott, unveiled a criminal-justice-reform plan. Whether that “something” they’re doing is commensurate to the scale of the problem, though, depends on the terms of the debate.

So far, the growing cost of imprisonment and the injustice of long prison sentences for nonviolent offenders have been the centerpieces of conversations about reform. But if that is all the criminal-justice reformers focus on, the “something” that gets done about the United States’ prison problem will fail to address the root causes of the explosion in the incarcerated population that has occurred over the past 40 years.

The Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act, as it is currently known, reduces mandatory minimum sentences for some nonviolent drug offenders, replaces life sentences for “three strikes” violations with 25 years, provides judges more discretion in sentencing low-level drug offenders, mostly ends solitary confinement for juveniles, and funds reentry programs, among other reforms. The bill is expected to pass in the Senate, be supported in the House (which introduced its own reform bill earlier this year), and ultimately be signed into law by President Obama.

In the immediate future, it will mean shorter sentences for some nonviolent drug offenders in federal prison; when applied retroactively, it will lead to the release of others. The prison population will shrink slightly, and the federal government will save a bit of money. But the United States will remain free to continue locking away millions of people.

Tony Papa of Drug Policy Alliance said in a statement, “and I’ve been fighting to end them since my release in 1996. I’m proud to say DPA worked with members of Congress to reach this...historic deal. It’s a great step in the right direction.”

“But,” he added, “we must remember it is just a step.” These changes only affect federal sentencing guidelines and don’t end mandatory minimums (in fact, the bill imposes new minimums, on certain crimes related to domestic violence and gun possession or sale linked to terrorist activity). Despite such moderate reforms, it is being hailed as “historic,” “major,” and a “game changer.” Why? Because a true agenda for change has been ceded to the language of reform. The debate started and has effectively ended without considering the injustice of the very existence of prisons. We never considered abolition.

In a reply to Ta-Nehisi Coates’s Atlantic cover story “The Black Family in the Age of Mass Incarceration,” political scientist Marie Gottschalk calls for a “third Reconstruction.” She argues that any plan to reduce the prison population cannot focus only on those already incarcerated, but must include a massive investment program to ameliorate the conditions that produce the violence that leads to arrest and imprisonment. “If the US is serious about reducing high levels of concentrated violence,” Gottschalk writes, “then addressing the country’s high levels of inequality and concentrated poverty should become a top priority, not a public-policy afterthought.”

Gottschalk is using language that will be familiar to longtime Nation readers. It was at the onset of Bill Clinton’s presidency that historian Eric Foner made the case in these pages for a “third Reconstruction” to repair the damage of done during the Reagan/Bush era. The Reconstruction, of course, is the period after the end of the Civil War, when federal investment and military protection made it possible for the formerly enslaved to relocate, vote, run for office, start their own businesses, and begin the building of thriving communities. The second Reconstruction is considered to be the fruit of the civil-rights movement, which ended legalized segregation, implemented federal protections to ensure the right to vote, and led to the passage of the Fair Housing Act. Gottschalk sees room to invest in the sort of programs that would drastically reduce the crimes used as a pretext for mass incarceration. To her, the “only legitimate long-term solution to the crime crisis is another Reconstruction.”

But the language of “reconstruction” can’t be employed without considering what preceded it—abolition. We abolished the institution of slavery. We abolished legalized segregation. If we want a third Reconstruction to take place, the abolition of prisons should be on the table.

Abolition makes sense, though, only if we see prisons as a site of injustice in and of themselves. And they are—not only because of the violence of rape and murder that exists within prison walls, the psychological damage, the lack of educational opportunities, and the denial of due process that locks up innocent people. Prison is the means by which we tell ourselves we are dealing with our societal ills, but only creating more. Prison makes us lazy thinkers, hungry for revenge instead of justice. Prison is a violent representation of our failure to fight inequality at all levels. In abolishing prison, we force ourselves to answer the difficult question: How do we provide safety and security for all people?

Abolition will not win right now. But an abolitionist framework for crafting reforms would lead to more substantial changes in the US prison system. An abolitionist framework makes us consider not only reducing mandatory minimums but eliminating them altogether. An abolitionist framework would

call for us to decriminalize possession and sale of drugs. Abolition would end the death penalty and life sentences, and push the maximum number of years that can be served for any offense down to ten years, at most.

With these reforms in place, we as a society would have a huge incentive to rehabilitate those in prison, and we would ensure the incarcerated are capable of socialization when they are released. And without being able to depend on prison as a site of retribution, we would have to find new ways to address things like gender-based violence, sexual assault, and domestic violence. And we could then start making the kinds of investments in alleviating poverty that Gottschalk calls for.

But we can’t do that so long as prison exists as a fail-safe. Abolition may not win today, but neither did it win when it was first introduced as solution for slavery or segregation. So long as we allow the terms of the debate to be shaped by what is politically possible, we’ll only ever be taking tiny steps and calling them major.

WORKING TOWARD ABOLITION...

by usprisonculture.com, October 5th 2015. Art by Bianca Diaz

In 2015, it is hard to imagine an institution more harmful than a prison. With daily reports of sexual assaults by correctional staff, hunger strikes by those opposing long-term solitary confinement, and many deaths in custody, prisons perpetuate violence and are antithetical to public safety.

In 2003, activist and scholar Angela Davis suggested that “our most difficult and urgent challenge to date is that of creatively exploring new terrains of justice where the prison no longer serves as our major anchor.” Twelve years later, her admonition is more urgent and relevant than ever. With the largest prison population on the planet—some 2.2 million people locked up and millions more under correctional supervision—politicians from Newt Gingrich to Hillary Clinton are rhetorically embracing the idea that mass incarceration is a national problem. Far fewer people, however, are ready to declare that prisons are fundamentally destructive and beyond reform. Both statements are true. As such, it is incumbent on all of us to collectively reimagine and build a viable and humane way to address our social problems beyond the endless cages. For these reasons and more, I am a prison abolitionist.

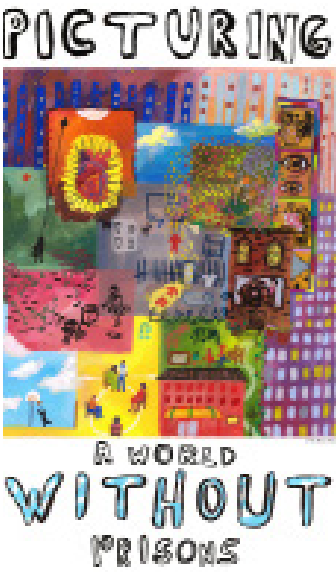
Yes, some individuals in prison have caused great harm to people and to communities. This cannot be minimized. That’s precisely why I am so passionate about the need to create community-based structures to address harm and to mediate conflicts. As a survivor of violence, I want safer communities. Importantly, most people who do harm will never be imprisoned. Building community-based structures will allow us to focus on harms that our current systems of policing and punishment ignore, neglect, or are unable to resolve.

From Ferguson to Baltimore, from Rikers Island to Guantánamo Bay, our prison nation ensures expensive and profound precarity and violence. Yet the current interventions posited as “alternatives to incarceration”—including drug-treatment programs, boot camps, community-based supervision or probation, electronic monitoring, and community service—still depend on carceral logics of surveillance, containment, and sometimes punishment. We must create new forms of justice defined by principles of respect, interrelatedness, and mutuality, and we need to ask: Are prisons obsolete?

Obviously, abolishing prisons is not something that will be accomplished easily, but we do have a growing community-accountability movement we can build on. Organizations and groups like Critical Resistance, Black & Pink, We Charge Genocide, Common Justice, the Audre Lorde Project, and my own organization, Project NIA, among many others, are practicing abolition every day. We are doing so by creating local projects and initiatives that offer alternative ideas and structures for mediating conflicts and addressing harms without relying on police or prisons. [...]

Scholar-activist Ruthie Gilmore has defined abolition as “a movement to end systemic violence, including the interpersonal vulnerabilities and displacements that keep the system going.” Practically, that looks like “creating structures that reduce the demand and need for prisons,” as my friend and colleague Erica Meiners has written. She adds: “It is ensuring that communities have viable, at least living-wage, jobs that are not dehumanizing. It means establishing mechanisms for alternative dispute resolution and other processes that address conflict or harm with mediation. It means ensuring that our most vulnerable populations, for example those who are mentally ill or undereducated, do not get warehoused in our prisons and jails because of the failure of other institutions such as health care and education.” [...]

We organize and mobilize to address the root causes of oppression and violence. We test the limits of our imagination of what’s possible in terms of addressing violence and harm. We creatively rethink our current structures of policing and warehousing individuals. We expose the brutality and abject failure of the current system. We foreground a revolutionary transformation of ideas while demanding that our resources be radically reallocated. Collectively envisioned and determined, abolition will look different from one community to the next. There are many vexing questions and unknowns to puzzle through, but we can do this together. We must, we will, and we are.



STRUGGLING FOR RIGHTS CONTINUED

TRANSGENDER LATINA WOMEN TO LAUNCH WORKER-OWNED BEAUTY BUSINESS

By Valerie Ann Dekimpe, theink.nyc, October 25th, 2015



The women attend daily classes and practice a wide array of services they will be expected to perform once they become fully licensed cosmetologists.

Wearing a floor-length sequined green dress, her carefully-styled brown curls cascading over her shoulders, Arely González held the attention of a crowd as she lip-synced a love song in Spanish.

“Look at me, I am not the same person I used to be,” she mouthed into the microphone, one hand thrust in the air for added drama.

González, 36, was performing in early October at a fundraiser for a new beauty business – a worker cooperative in Queens that she will run with seven other transgender Latina women. Their business, the first of its kind in New York City, aims to provide stable and dignified jobs for the women and to serve as a model to other transgender workers who have faced employment discrimination.

According to a 2011 nationwide survey by the National Center for Transgender Equality and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 47 percent of transgender and gender non-conforming individuals said they had been fired, not hired or denied a promotion because of their gender identity.

On Thursday, Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo announced an executive order introducing statewide legislation that would ban harassment and discrimination against transgender and gender non-conforming individuals, in both the public and private spheres. The move comes months after the New York Senate failed to pass the Gender Expression Nondiscrimination Act (GENDA) despite multiple attempts since 2003.

Workplace problems are familiar to the co-op members, who all belong to PRYDE, Make the Road’s LGBTQ support group. They were inspired to form their own business after learning of a similar venture run by transgender activists from Argentina.

“The girls got immediately excited by the idea of creating a business where they would be the sole owners, where there wouldn’t be any bosses verbally and physically harassing them, and where they could earn a dignified wage to survive,” said Daniel Puerto, worker cooperative developer at Make the Road New York, the nonprofit incubating the co-op.

The women are considering several business models. Some are more traditional, such as opening a salon or renting chairs in an existing establishment. More innovative options include running a mobile salon or offering on-site spa services to city office workers.

In the meantime, the eight women are studying cosmetology at Parisien Beauty School in Woodside. Their training costs \$6,850 per person for the yearlong course. Make the Road, which has previously started two other worker cooperatives, launched a campaign on Go Fund Me October to raise \$50,000 to help cover the costs. As of mid-October, it had raised \$3,706.

A 2013 Make the Road survey of the LGBTQ community in Manhattan and Queens found transgender and gender non-conforming individuals face the highest rates of unemployment among those surveyed. Forty-three percent of transgender respondents said they were looking for a job; 40 percent said they had experienced some form of discrimination based on their gender identity when being considered for a job or promotion; and 44 percent said they had been forced to quit a job because of discrimination they endured in the workplace.

González, who came to New York City from Mexico in 1996, began her transition in 2002 and said she did not experience employment discrimination at her restaurant jobs until she began looking for work in Queens in 2012, three years after she and her husband moved to the borough.

She sought a position as a cook at a restaurant in Corona, but despite having experience in the service industry and the required license, González said she was told the position had been filled. A help wanted sign stayed up for another week, she said. “It hits you because it’s a Latino restaurant,” she said in Spanish. “They are Mexicans. They look at you up and down and tell you no. It’s our own Latino community that discriminates [against] us the most.”

Since 2002, New York City Human Rights Law has prohibited discrimination based on gender identity in employment, housing, public accommodations, credit and education. Statewide, existing anti-discrimination law protects individuals from discrimination on the basis of sex. Cuomo’s recent executive action would extend this legal protection to include gender identity, transgender status and gender dysphoria.

Cristina Herrera, president of the Translatina Network, a leadership

group of Latina transgender women, said these legal protections are valuable but “limited,” as high legal costs often prohibit transgender individuals from exercising their rights. The priority should be to enhance employment opportunities, Herrera said.

“One of the major barriers is that if they don’t have jobs, then they don’t have access to housing, medical care, education,” she said. “They need to have access to better paying jobs.”

The law can also be difficult to enforce given the intangible nature of gender identity based discrimination. “Under the law, an employer cannot tell you ‘I’m not going to hire you because you are a person of color or because you are transgender,’ ” Puerto said. “But he can deny you a job because he doesn’t like you, and that ‘like’ can be based on your gender expression or because you are a LGBTQ person.”

Discrimination can lead to poverty and psychological distress. And many transgender women in the Latino community are immigrants who lack access to medical and social services.

According to the 2011 National Transgender Discrimination Survey, 16 percent of transgender respondents reported entering the underground economy for income.

That’s what one 45-year-old co-op member who only wanted to be identified by her last initial, M., did after fleeing police brutality in Mexico approximately 12 to 14 years ago. Unlike other transgender women who struggle to find jobs, M. said she was offered work in beauty salons on Roosevelt Avenue washing customer’s hair or sweeping the floor, but only if she would “come as a man,” she said. “Once they even told me, ‘If you could wear a bandage around your breasts or strap up that would be even better.’ ”

Unable to find a well-paid job that did not require changing her appearance, M. resorted to sex work to support herself. “You have to adapt,” she said. “One way or the other you have to survive.”

Both González and M. hope the cooperative will improve their lives and those of other transgender Latinas. “This is why we are here,” González said. “To fight for a better future for ourselves, for a better world for our transgender community – and for future generations, too.”

NEW BOOK SHARES STORIES OF TRANSGENDER WOMEN SERVING TIME IN MEN’S PRISONS



Excerpt from San Jose Inside, by Jennifer Wadsworth, Oct. 21 2015:
Alone in her cell, sleep became an escape. Each time she awoke, Daniella Tavake would sob, unnerved by her own reflection in the scratched-up metal mirror, sickened by the feel of whiskers, coarse and uncut, obscuring her once-smooth face.

Locked up at a Central Valley men’s prison, the transgender Redwood City native spent several weeks in the summer of 2013 in solitary confinement. Though for her own protection—another inmate called her a “faggot,” she says, and then physically attacked her—isolation brought its own kind of torture.

“When I look in the mirror, I want to cry,” Tavake wrote in a letter at the time. “I am forced to wear a beard.”

In other ways, the two decades she spent cycling in and out of prison on nonviolent, mostly drug-related offenses, reaffirmed her identity in a way the outside world never had.

“I was a woman,” she wrote in one of her letters from Salinas Valley State Prison. “So when I went home, I felt out of place. I felt like I didn’t belong out of prison. I used to dream of being sent back to prison and in my dreams I was always happy and felt like I belonged. I wasn’t being treated like a woman when I went home and it truly bothered me.”

Preferring confinement, of course, says less about Tavake’s treatment in prison—two decades marked by violence from being a woman among men—than about the struggle of being trans in a society hostile to anyone outside the commonly presumed gender binary.

As a teen in the South Bay, Tavake turned to gangs and meth to quell flashbacks of childhood sexual abuse and the anguish of being in a body at odds with her femininity. Behind bars, at least, the men saw her as a woman. Behind bars, at least, she began taking hormones that curved her frame and softened her skin.

“But I still shouldn’t even be in this place,” she wrote in her distinct looping script to pen pal Kristin Schreier Lyseggen. “I can’t wait to get out so I can put all this behind me.”

Lyseggen, a Norway-born, Bay Area-based journalist, shares Tavake’s story by way of their correspondence in her new book, The Women of San Quentin: Soul Murder of Transgender Women in Male Prisons. The volume, filled with the letters, portraits and biographies of nine gender-variant inmates, offers a rare, nuanced glimpse of the trauma inflicted upon trans women by a system that considers them men.

Months ago, we listed some amazing individuals and groups who work tirelessly in support of the liberation of LGBTQ prisoners and asked you all to make the difficult decision of who should receive an award. During the Decade of Black & Pink event, we presented the following awards on a big screen and gave certificates to the award winners. Congratulations and thanks to everyone who is struggling toward collective liberation!

Exceptional Newspaper Submission Award

Ms. Jazzie

has been chosen by the Black & Pink membership to receive the Exceptional Newspaper Submission Award in honor of being an outstanding Black and Pink family member and for her exceptional submissions to the Black & Pink Newspaper in the year 2014!

Kuwasi Balagoon Award

Dee Farmer

has been chosen by the Black & Pink membership to receive the Kuwasi Balagoon Award in honor of being an outstanding Black and Pink family member and in recognition of her work as a jailhouse lawyer demanding justice for all prisoners, particularly transgender women!

Kuwasi Balagoon Award

Ashley Diamond

has been chosen by the Black & Pink membership to receive the Kuwasi Balagoon Award in honor of being an outstanding Black and Pink family member and in recognition of her efforts in exposing sexual violence, physical assaults, and harassment in Georgia prisons!

Mike Riegle Award

LGBT Books to Prisoners

has been chosen by the Black & Pink membership to receive the Mike Riegle Award in recognition of their continued excellent work sending books and educational materials to LGBTQ-identified prisoners across the United States!

Out of Control Award

CeCe McDonald

has been chosen by the Black & Pink membership to receive the Out of Control Award in honor of her work as an outspoken fighter in the movements for LGBTQ liberation, prison abolition, and racial justice!

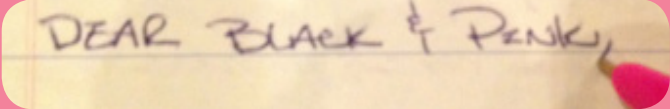
Pay It No Mind Award

TGI Justice Project

has been chosen to receive the Pay It No Mind Award in honor of their outstanding work standing up for the rights of transgender, gender variant, and intersex prisoners!

ADDRESSES: PLEASE NOTE OUR NEW ADDRESSES FOR MAIL!

Please Note: You can send multiple requests/topics in one envelope! Due to concerns about consent and confidentiality, you cannot sign up other people for the newspaper. However, we can accept requests from multiple people in the same envelope. There’s no need to send separate requests in more than one envelope. If you are being released and would still like to receive a copy of the newspaper, please let us know the address we can send the newspaper to!

	Black & Pink - _____ 614 Columbia Rd Dorchester, MA 02125
If you would like to request:	Please write one or more of these topics in the top line of the address:
Newspaper Subscriptions, Pen-Pal Program, Address Change, Request Erotica, Religious Support & Volunteering (Send thank you cards to donors, etc.)	Black & Pink - General
Newspaper Submissions- Stories, Articles, Poems & Art	Black & Pink - Newspaper Submissions
Black & Pink Organization Feedback-- Especially the Slip on Page 9	Black & Pink - Feedback
Black and Pink Religious Zine	Black and Pink - The Spirit Inside
Advocacy Requests- Include details about situation and thoughts about how calls or letters might help	Black & Pink - Advocacy
Submit to Erotica Zine	Black & Pink - HOT PINK
Stop Your Newspaper Subscription Black and Pink Hotline Number	Black & Pink – STOP Subscription 617.519.4387